

# U. S. WASTE IN WISCONSIN 'BIRD PARADISE' TOLD

## Native Farmers Chafe at "Resettling" Delay.

**BY WILLIAM BROMAGE.**  
[Chicago Tribune Press Service.]  
Necedah, Wis., Oct. 10.—[Special.]—Here in the center of Wisconsin an expensive social experiment of the New Deal under the direction of Prof. Rexford Guy Tugwell's resettlement administration is unfolding before a disappointed and disillusioned rural populace.

Avowedly for the purpose of moving 300 families from so-called submarginal farm lands and creating a modernistic game preserve, the venture, after two years of planning and nine months of costly development work, has become the object of criticism and ridicule throughout several counties in this section.

**Money Poured into Project.**  
Already the federal government has poured \$1,500,000 into the project and yet most of the farmers whose lands have been purchased or are under option are still on their farms.

Managers, supervisors, inspectors, and game experts drive over country roads from one town to another in an attempt to find some sort of work for more than 1,000 federal employees classified as relief labor. More people received government money in 1936 in this section than in any of the worst depression years.

This project is supposed to be a perfect example of Prof. Tugwell's advanced methods of social planning. Yet the prime object of the whole plan—that of resettling these farmers—apparently has been forgotten in a frenzied effort to get the greatest possible number of workers on the federal pay roll.

**"The Conservationists' Dream."**  
The venture is known officially as the Central Wisconsin Game Project. According to the project manager, Silas J. Knudsen of Wisconsin Dells, the project has been "the dream of Wisconsin conservationists for years." Birds are being counted, food is being raised in great quantities for the birds, shelters and feeders are being built for them, but there are few birds in the area.

The "birdmen," as the officials and supervisors of the project have been dubbed by the farmers hereabout, maintain that the birds will come with the development of the project. One farmer in the vicinity estimates that there are about 3,000 upland birds (as distinguished from water fowl) in the 160,000 acres included in the project and computes the cost of the project to date at about \$500 per bird.

**Land Cost Set at \$750,000.**  
As originally planned, the project called for a game preserve of 250,000 acres, but it was later reduced to its present size. This land has been purchased by the government or is now under option at a total cost of between \$750,000 and \$800,000, according to Knudsen. The cost of development work, including the pay rolls for from 1,000 to 1,200 employees since last January, totals about the same amount, he said.

The project is located about fifty miles northwest of Wisconsin Dells. It embraces land in three counties, Juneau, Jackson, and Monroe. About 85,000 acres of the land was purchased from the three counties at a cost of \$1.75 an acre and the balance from private owners, some of whom were resident farmers, but many of whom were land speculators, who bought the land at tax sales to sell to the federal government at big profits. About 16,000 acres of the area are under cultivation.

**Work at Cross Purposes.**  
The prices for private lands ranged from \$1.75 an acre to \$15 or more, with the average cost between \$6 and \$7 an acre. Some of these lands were purchased at tax sales for around \$1 an acre.

To the visitor the whole project appears to be a mass of contradictions and blundering. Less than two years ago one federal agency, using Works Progress administration labor, constructed numerous small dams in this area to hold back the water in the drainage ditches for the dry weather. This was done in an effort to improve the land for the farmers.

At the same time that the land was being improved by one federal agency another was making its plans to move the farmers out of the area because the land was supposed to be unprofitable.

Now comes the game project which is spending vast sums to build bigger dams and dikes to keep more water back to flood large areas to attract water fowl.

**More Farmers to Move In.**  
It is recalled also that several years ago the University of Wisconsin considered using a part of this land for a resettlement project. The plan was to move farmers into a part of this section from unprofitable farms elsewhere in the state.

Although the land is supposedly submarginal and unfit to provide a living for the farmer, yet it is the plan of the resettlement administra-

## DISSATISFIED WITH NEW DEAL



L. N. Cumming (left) and C. H. Carpenter, Wisconsin farmers who sold their farms to the resettlement administration. Cumming complains that he has been waiting more than a year to get the money for his farm. Carpenter insists he did not receive a fair price for his land.

tion to keep as much land under cultivation as is now being used. After all these farmers move out the administration will move other farmers in to grow crops for the birds. According to Knudsen, about thirty farmers will be kept in the area.

They will be asked to raise crops, probably on a share for share basis—one share for the farmer and one share for the birds.

It is expected that the government will have to grant the farmers some compensation in addition to allowing them to use the farms.

The project has proved a bitter disappointment to many inhabitants. Some complain of long delays in getting their money. Others, now that the project is definitely under way, regret they will have to move away from the country where they always have lived. Many maintain that they were not given fair prices for their property.

Most of them assert that the plans of the government for moving them to more fertile and modern farms have come to naught. One of those who expressed dissatisfaction is Gilbert Haight, a farmer at Mather.

**What the Farmers Receive.**  
"I optioned my land to the government two years ago," Haight said. "Last year they bought my 180 acres and when they paid off the mortgage all I got for my place was \$19. When I agreed to the deal I was told that I would be moved to a better place. I have been allowed to live here since I got the \$19, but I have heard nothing in a year about being moved to another farm."

Henry Becker, a neighbor of Haight, got net proceeds of 11 cents after the deal for the sale of his farm was all settled.

L. N. Cumming, a farmer at Meadow Valley, complained that he has been unable to get his money.

**His Plans Are Upset.**  
"On the strength of their assurances that I would get my money quickly," Cummings said, "I arranged last year to buy a place in California. We even went so far as to send some of our furnishings to California. Mrs.

Cummings was postmistress and resigned that job. We sold our thirty-three head of cattle. We have been kept sitting here for more than a year without any income.

"There has been one delay after another. The reason they don't pay off is because Tugwell's department wants to keep jobs open. The whole thing is just a tie-in between the University of Wisconsin, the Progressive party in the state, and the New Deal. All the good jobs for local people go to political office holders. The chairman of the township boards have the good jobs."

But even since he moved to that farm he has been on relief."

**Examples of Waste Told.**  
Many examples of waste of time and money in the development of the project are related by farmers.

One farmer said a crew of twenty-three men spent a whole day harvesting fifteen acres of buckwheat. "If you figure up the wages for twenty laborers at \$3.20 a day, one timekeeper at \$3.60, one foreman at \$4.40, and a truck and driver at \$10," he said, "you will find that the cost of harvesting this buckwheat was \$82. Why, one man with a binder could do it for less than \$10."

One of the jobs of the "birdmen" and their crews was to take a bird census. The officials here refused to divulge what the census showed. However, it was learned that the best estimate that can be made is about one upland bird to each fifty or sixty acres. This would mean a bird population of about 3,000.

**Men Scare Each Other.**  
The bird count was made by having a long line of men march through the brush and woods counting the birds they scared up. The farmers say that sometime the men got lost and scared each other.

The bird and deer shelters are the butt of joking and ridicule by the natives. The shelters are built by wiring trees and branches together. A feeder, which is a hopper filled

with grain, is placed inside the shelter.

The natives say that prairie chickens or grouse will not go inside such a shelter for feed, although the crows and bluejays will. The "birdmen" insist, however, that the birds will feed inside and say they saw some feeding there last winter.

**Unfair Treatment Denied.**  
The resettlement officials deny that they have treated the farmers unfairly. They assert that their methods are practical, although they admit that they may appear strange to the natives.

"When we started out to buy this land," Knudsen said, "a lot of people here were just barely making a living. We worked out a definite appraisal system in purchasing the land. I do not feel that the farmers have any real complaint over the prices paid for their farms. In all cases we paid more than the prices of better farms in other localities."

**Face Difficulties with Titles.**  
"What delays there have been in paying off some farmers have been due to difficulties in clearing up titles on the properties. It is a hard job to clear these titles in some cases. They must be perfect, because they must be finally approved by the department of justice. We hope to have all the farmers out of here by April 1."

"About 8 per cent of our development expenditures have been for administration, 16 per cent for materials, and the balance for labor."

"The August pay roll numbered a little over 1,100. Earlier in the year we had 1,200 at work. These men work the land, develop the game preserve, do resettlement work and some road building."

"The workers get from \$40 a month upward for a 12½ day month. Our stenographers get around \$60 a month and our mechanics get from \$45 to \$125 a month for full time. We have technical men also, but I will not disclose what salaries they get."